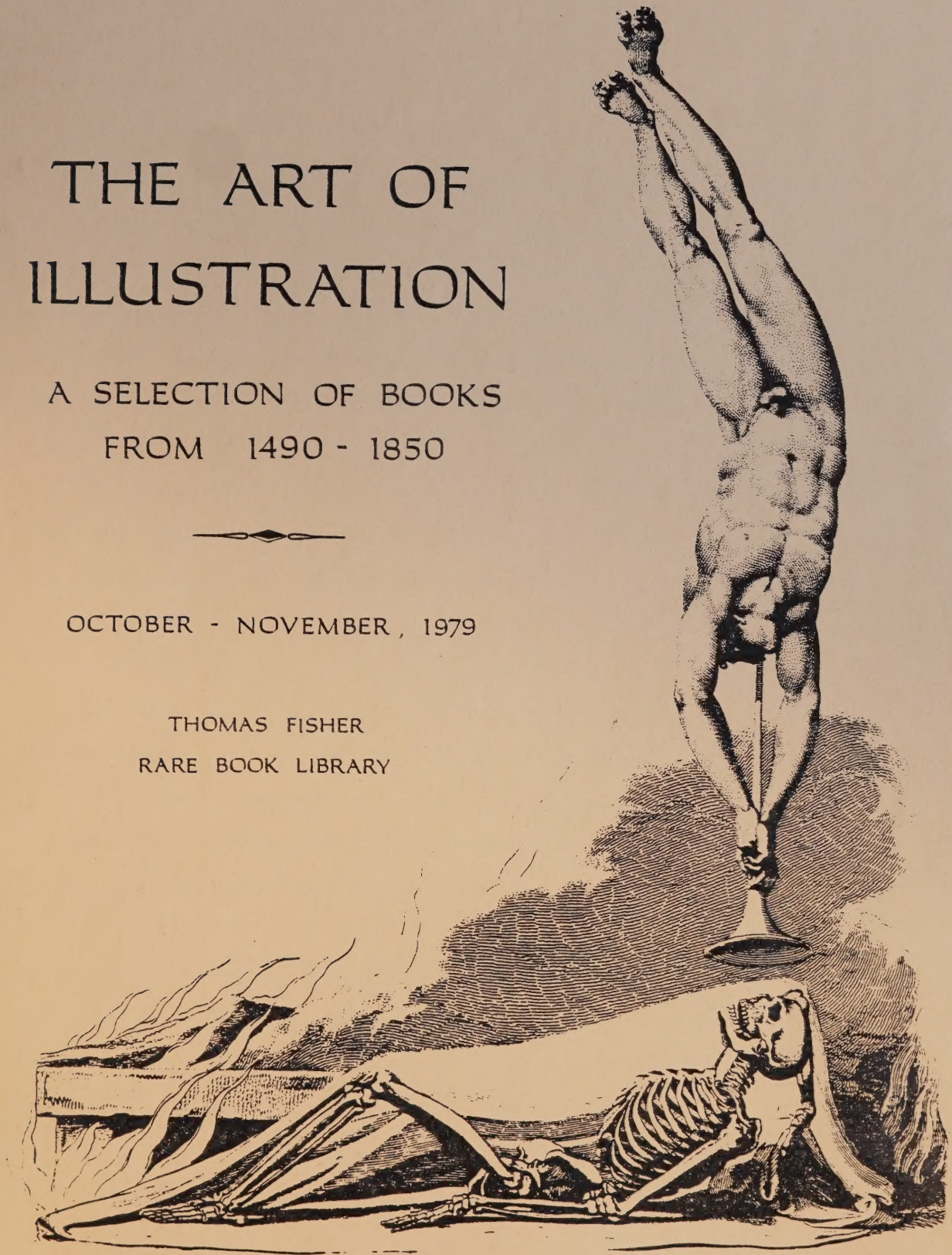
THE ART OF ILLUSTRATION

A SELECTION OF BOOKS FROM 1490 - 1850

OCTOBER - NOVEMBER, 1979

THOMAS FISHER
RARE BOOK LIBRARY



The history of book illustration, reflected in the most general sense by the works displayed in this exhibition, is both the history of the artist's perception of his relationship to a literary text and the history of the development of reproductive processes. The earliest printed woodcuts retain much of the style of the manuscript illustrations which preceded them but the woodcut technique has proved adaptable to many different styles of artistic expression.

The woodcut is compatible with moveable type as the actual printing of both is a letter-press process. Engravings, however, require special equipment and tools for both their preparation and for their printing. The intaglio process was used very early for illustrations that required great detail and a fine line, such as maps. The engraving and the various etching processes that were developed as adjuncts to engraving became the most popular methods of illustration because of the fidelity with which they could reproduce drawings and the great range of illustrative effect that could be achieved through their use. The planographic processes, principally lithography came later and proved particularly adaptable to colour reproduction.

Many artists of renown practised book illustration and many illustrators achieved their fame through their illustrations. A single exhibition can only hope to suggest the immense scope of book illustration but can give some appreciation of this most fascinating of the arts of the book.

CASE I

Schedel, Hartmann. Liber Chronicarum, 1493

One of the greatest works of graphic art of the fifteenth century, the Nuremberg Chronicle records the history of the world from the Creation to the beginnings of the Renaissance. Schedel's text is essentially scholastic in the medieval tradition but also incorporates aspects of the new humanism that had been introduced into Germany during the preceding twenty years. The chronicle of events for 1493 is followed by six blank pages so that the purchaser would be able to fill in his own brief history, and then the history of the world is neatly rounded off with an account of the Apocalypse and Day of Judgement. The fame of this book rests however, on its woodcut illustrations, the graphic design, and the printing, seldom surpassed in almost five hundred years. The two artists responsible for the production of the approximately six hundred and fifty woodcut illustrations (used a total of eighteen hundred times) were Michael, Wolgemut and Wilhelm Pleydenwurff but many other artists were obviously involved. Albrecht Dürer was employed by Wolgemut and at least one Chronicle illustration has been ascribed to this master of Renaissance art. The printing was entrusted to Anton Koberger, one of the great scholar-printers, and his skill is particularly demonstrated by the reproduction of the large woodcut views of cities.

Dante, Alighieri. La Commedia. 1491

This edition of Dante was edited by Pietro da Figino, with a commentary by Christoforo Landino, and printed in Venice by Petrus de Plasiis Cremonensis. The woodcuts, by an unknown artist, are simple but delicate; lacking in detail but with the light charm often associated with Renaissance Italian literature. The design of each page is reminiscent of the illuminated manuscript.

Terentius Afer, Publius. Comoediae. 1493

This Lyons edition of Terence is the first illustrated edition of the complete plays and is considered the most beautiful of the fifteenth century books from that city. It was edited by Jodocus Badius Ascensius, at that time press-corrector for the printer Johann Trechsel, and contains the commentaries of Aelius Donatus and Guy Jouenneaux. Badius is thought to have commissioned the woodcuts, from an unknown, but expert, artist so that the illiterate might be able to understand the action. There is a full-page representation of the theatre building and each play is provided with its own stage set. Series of small oblong woodcuts are used to display the characters and indicate the action. Thus a realistic record of Renaissance theatrical performance is preserved through the vivid and often humorous designs.

Septembre

Septembre ſuis qui du reſin
Au preſſouer faiz ſortir le vin
blanc et vermet. tel quon demande
Et comme dieu le me commande
On doit en moy ſen eſt luſage
Cueillir des arbres tout fructage
La ſaiſon requiert en mon temps
que nul fruit ne demeure aux champs

Je me faiz ſeptembre appeller
Plain de tous biens en tous endrois
On peult en ma maiſon trouuer
froment vin auoynes et pois
Tous abrieges par vneſpoys
Si doit chaſcun ceſte ſaiſon
Aduiſer quil ſoit tant peu ſoit
Pourueu de toute garniſon

Kalendrier des Bergers. Paris, 1499

One of the earliest printed almanacs, this beautifully illustrated book contains astronomical observations, agricultural information and household hints. Each month has a full-page woodcut illustrating a typical seasonal activity such as seeding and threshing for October. The printing was done by Gui Marchand for the famous Jean Petit.

CASE 2

Bordone, Benedetto. Libro ... Nel Qual si ragiona de tutte l'Isole del Mondo. 1528

This celebrated book on islands was the work of a Venetian cartographer and was intended to be used as a guide for seamen. The woodcuts are mainly maps using landmarks (hills, churches etc.) to add pictorial interest. Of special interest is the plan of the city of Temistitan (Mexico) before its destruction by Cortes, the first representation of the city. Considerable detail is shown in this remarkable example of woodcut artistry.

Ptolemy, Claudius. Geographia. 1508

Of the many editions of Ptolemy this is one of the most important as it contains the famous Johannes Ruysch map of the world depicting America, the earliest such map published by an American explorer. The text was translated from the Greek by Jacobus Angelus and edited by Marcus Beneventanus and Joannes Cota. The significance of this work from the standpoint of illustration is

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that the maps are printed from copper plate engravings rather than the more familiar woodcuts, and the finer line and greater detail are readily apparent. Two copper plates were used for each of the thirty-four double page maps, one for the left folio and one for the right. A number of woodcuts are scattered throughout the text as well.

Paccioli, Luca. Divina Proportione. 1509

The first edition of a classic work on the design and proportion of Roman capital letters, this book contains a striking series of woodcuts. Paccioli was a close friend and disciple of Leonardo da Vinci, and his master-piece, published in Venice, is a very early instance of the influence of Leonardo's theoretical and technical work. The subject of proportion was one that fascinated Renaissance artists and Paccioli is the last of a series of early Italian theorists of the design of the alphabet.

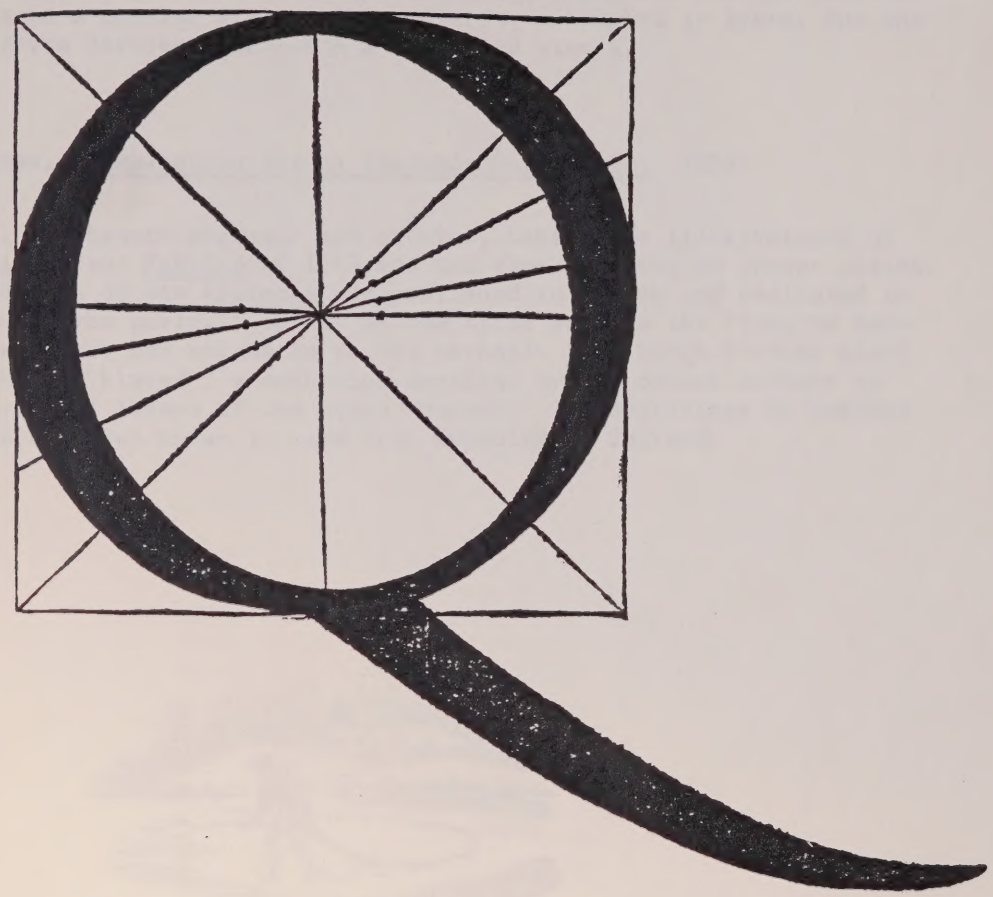
CASE 3

Ortelius, Abraham. Theatrum Orbis Terrarum. 1584.

Atlases, in the modern sense of a systematic and comprehensive collection of maps of uniform size, first appeared in the Netherlands in the sixteenth century. The first edition of the Theatrum Orbis Terrarum was published in 1570 and proved so popular that two further editions appeared in the same year and were followed by numerous editions each of which added new maps. All these maps were engraved and most of them were made pictorially more interesting by various fanciful decorations. The maps themselves are a highly sophisticated form of illustration that incorporates the text as an integral part of an overall design. This atlas was printed and published by Christopher Plantin who had one of the largest printing establishments in Europe, and this copy is thought to have been bound at the Plantin Press itself.

Alciati, Andrea. Emblematum Libellus. 1544

The first of hundreds of editions of Alciati's popular book of emblems



Queſta lettera. Q. cõme diſopra diſſi ſe caua del. O. terminando ſua gamba tre teſte de ſua altezza ſotto el q̃drato cioe de le nouue parti le tre del ſuo quadrato ouero diametro del ſuo tõdo cõme qui appare ꝓportionata. guidando le pance groſſe e ſue ſutili oppoſite a pũcto cõme del. O. ſo dicto. El a ſua gãba uol eſſer longa noue teſte cioe quanto el ſuo quadrato arectangulo. e la fine uol eſſer alta la ponẽta in ſu un nono de la altezza ſequendo la curuita de la penna cõ la degradatione de la ſua groſſezza.

Luca Paccioli. Divina Proportione. 1509

appeared in 1531. The images or symbols depicted in woodcut or engraving were coupled with epigrammatical verses which described and interpreted the illustrations in a popular style. This edition, published in Lyons, has one hundred and seven devices, each with a motto and stanza.

Geminus, Thomas. Compendiosa totius Anatomie Delineatio. 1559.

Geminus, an obscure engraver and printer, copied the illustrations of Vesalius' magnificent Fabrica of 1543 and had them engraved on copper plates. This third edition of his Anatomie was published in London and dedicated to Queen Elizabeth (the portrait of her on the title page is the first to have been published after her accession to the throne). The large folding plate in this volume is "flayed", a technique employed by anatomical artists to display the several layers of the human anatomy. The engravings by Geminus are among the earliest known to have been produced in England.

CASE 4

Wither, George. A Collection of Emblemes. 1635.

One of the earliest of English emblem books praised by Charles Lamb for "a hearty homeliness of manner and plain moral speaking". These illustrations had appeared originally in Holland some twenty years earlier but the verses for each are by Wither himself. The emblems were engraved by Crispin van de Passe and the book was designed as a lottery, with a chart and pointer to determine which emblem fell to the lot of each player.

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ILLVSTR. X. *Book.* 2

OVr *Elders*, when their meaning was to ſhew
A *native-ſpeedineſſe* (in Emblem wiſe)
The picture of a *Dolphin-Fiſh* they drew;
Which, through the waters, with great ſwiftneſſe, flies.
An *Anchor*, they did figure, to declare
Hope, ſtayednеſſe, or a *grave-deliberation:*
And therefore when thoſe two, united are,
It giveth us a two-fold Intimation.
For, as the *Dolphin* putteth us in minde,
That in the Courſes, which we have to make,
Wee ſhould not be, to *ſlothfulneſſe* enclin'd;
But, ſwift to follow what we undertake:
So, by an *Anchor* added thereunto,
Inform'd wee are, that, to maintaine our *ſpeed*,
Hope, muſt bee joyn'd therewith (in all we doe)
If wee will undiſcouraged proceed.
It ſheweth (alſo) that, our *ſpeedineſſe*,
Muſt have ſome *ſtaydneſſe*; leſt, when wee ſuppoſe
To proſecute our aymes with good ſucceſſe,
Wee may, by *Raſhneſſe*, good endeavors loſe.
They worke, with moſt ſecuritie, that know
The *Times*, and beſt *Occaſions* of *delay*;
When, likewiſe, to be neither *ſwift*, nor *ſlow*;
And, when to practiſe all the *ſpeed*, they may.
For, whether calme, or ſtormie-paſſages,
(Through this life's *Ocean*) ſhall their *Bark* attend;
This *double Vertue*, will procure their eaſe:
And, them, in all neceſſities, befriend.
By *Speedineſſe*, our works are timely wrought;
By *Staydneſſe*, they, to paſſe are, ſafely, brought.

They,

Bonarelli della Rovere, Prospero. Il Solimano. 1620

The first illustrated edition of a celebrated tragedy, with six etchings by Jacques Callot, this work is an important source for the history of scenographic art. Callot's etchings demonstrate vividly the richness of this technique and complement the action of the drama.

Aesop. The Fables. 1665.

Aesop's Fables has been illustrated by many distinguished artists. This edition, with verse paraphrases by John Ogilby, contains the engravings of Wenceslaus Hollar, the prolific delineator of seventeenth century England. Hollar's illustrations were first published in 1651 but this edition of 1665 is the first in folio format. The title-page states that this book is "adorned with sculptures" and Hollar's gift for the clear literal rendering of a scene makes his illustrations particularly suitable to this text.

Milton, John. Paradise Lost. 1688.

The first edition of Paradise Lost to be illustrated contains these striking engravings designed by John Baptist Medina and executed by M. Burgess. In style they are unlike any other English illustrations of the century and appear to anticipate William Blake and the mezzotints of John Martin.

Wenceslaus Hollar. The Fables of Aesop. 1665

CASE 5

La Fontaine, Jean de. Fables Choisies. 1776

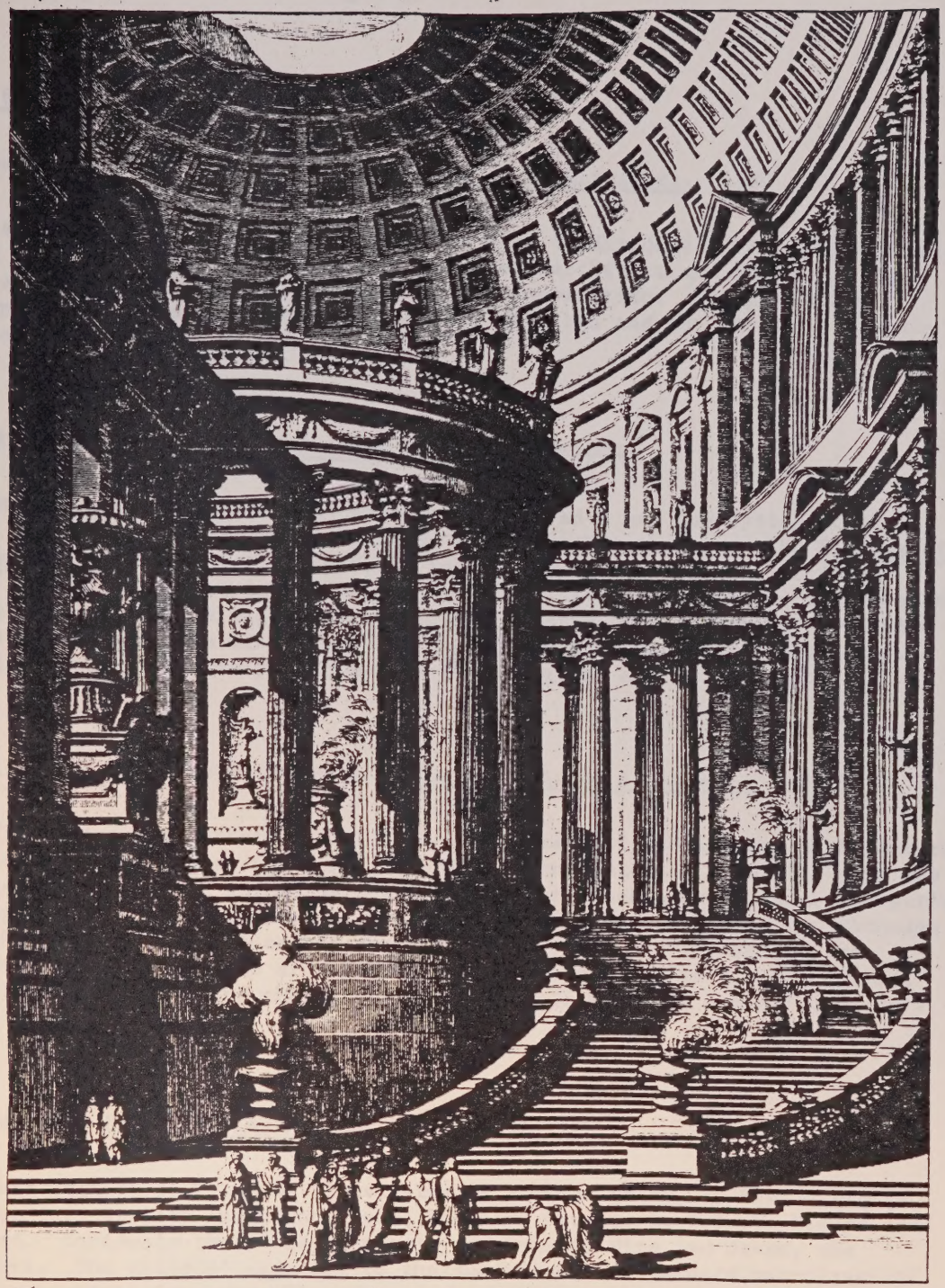
This eighteenth century edition of the Fables of La Fontaine is illustrated from the designs of Jean Baptiste Oudry, the French painter and engraver famous for his skill in depicting animals. Because the plates were worked over by a series of engravers and etchers, Oudry's own work is sometimes considerably altered but these plates added greatly to his reputation.

Bidloo, Govard. Anatomia Humani Corporis. 1685

The magnificent copper plate engravings in this volume have been attributed both to G. de Lairesse and Pieter van Gunst. Although they show the precision and detail associated with seventeenth century anatomical work the figures are still displayed as part of a scene replete with allegorical associations. Bidloo, a Dutch anatomist, suffered the distinction of having his work plagiarized by William Cowper in 1698, including the plates. Of the numerous seventeenth century anatomies these plates are among the most artistically satisfying examples.

Butler, Samuel. Hudibras. 1744

William Hogarth is best remembered for his series of prints which eventually were issued with texts and thus technically became illustrations after the fact. He did, however, also illustrate a few existing texts amongst the earliest examples of which is Butler's Hudibras, the first Hogarth edition appearing in 1726. Although slightly crude these engravings are unmistakably Hogarthian, with his characteristic concern for everyday scenes and his vivid characterization.



Tempio antico inventato e disegnato alla maniera di quelli che si fabbricavano in onore della Dea Vesta; quindi vedesi in mezzo la grand'Ara, sopra della quale conservavasi dalle Vergini Vestali l'inestinguibile fuoco sacro. Tutta l'opera è Corintia ornata di statue e di bassi rilievi, e di altri ornamenti ancora. Il piano di questo Tempio è notabilmente elevato dal suolo: vedesi in mezzo la Cella rotonda, come lo è pure tutto il gran Vaso del Tempio stesso: quattro loggie portavano ad essa, e per altrettante scale vi si ascendeva. Le parieti del gran Tempio hanno due ordini, sopra il secondo s'incurva una vasta Cupola con isfondati, e rosoni, e termina in una grande apertura, dalla qle dipende il lume alla Cella che le sta sotto.

Gio Batta Piranesi Archit. inv. ed incise in Roma l'Anno 1743

G.B. Piranesi. Opere Varie. 1750

CASE 6

Piranesi, Giovanni Battista. Opere Varie di Architettura. 1750

Architectural books from all periods have traditionally been illustrated, often very elaborately. Piranesi, a prominent architect and designer, drew upon archaeological sources for much of his inspiration. His grandiose designs are surprisingly delicate and very detailed and the quality of reproduction of his etchings rich and dark.

Bewick, Thomas. History of British Birds. 1797-1804

Bewick, the master of wood engraving, evolved a new conception of the black and white picture, the so-called "white-line" technique. The History of British Birds, while ornithologically interesting because of the artist's close observation of birds in their natural habitat, is most evocative because of the often elaborate vignettes of English country life. Through these end-pieces Bewick was able to further his objectives as a moralist and teacher. His techniques were widely imitated both in England and on the Continent.

Stuart, James and Revett, Nicholas. The Antiquities of Athens. 1762-94

The designs of classical buildings influenced British art and architecture tremendously during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and this work was of great importance in spreading the knowledge of Greek architecture. Revett's drawings constituted the first accurate survey of Athenian buildings, although he withdrew from the publication shortly after volume one appeared. The illustrative reproductions of buildings are often set within a topographical frame work of scenery and characters and the quality of the engraving is very high.

Ovidius Naso, Publius. Les Metamorphoses. 1767-70

This edition of Ovid was illustrated by a whole galaxy of French eighteenth century artists including Eisen, Boucher, Moreau, Le Prince, Monnet and Choffard. Curiously the title-page only mentions Le Mire and Basan, the engravers. The artists' approach to the subject was a standard neo-classical perception which gives the illustrations a rather static quality.

CASE 7

Rousseau, Jean Jacques. La Botanique. 1805

Rousseau's text, which did not appear in his collected works until after his death, is superbly complemented by the magnificent botanical plates of P.J. Redouté, who is especially remembered for his books on lilacs and roses. These plates are printed in colours, but finished by hand. This book is but one example of a whole series of illustrated flower books lavishly produced during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

Boydell, John. Graphic Illustrations of the Dramatic Works of Shakespeare. 1813

When Alderman Boydell approached a group of the most famous English artists with commissions to paint illustrations to the works of Shakespeare his idea was received with enthusiasm. Eventually some thirty-three artists contributed a total of one hundred and seventy-six paintings and Boydell's Shakespeare Gallery was opened to exhibit the paintings. Publication of the works of art was also undertaken by subscription. The paintings were eventually dispersed by lottery but the engravings continued to be issued in various forms. Henry Tresham's painting of Antony and Cleopatra, Act IV, Scene IV is now owned by Professor and Mrs. G.E. Bentley Jr. and illustrates the contrast between the original and the reproduction.

Blair, Robert. The Grave. 1813

Among the most popular of the drawings of William Blake are those he did for Blair's poem, first published in 1808. Although Blake had expected to do the engraving as well Schiavonetti was employed for that task. The 1813 reprint of this work was published by Ackermann, the leading publisher of illustrated books.

CASE 8

Combe, William. The English Dance of Death. 1815-16

Thomas Rowlandson's Dance of Death displays his wayward but tremendously vital and inventive genius to advantage. It was among the most successful of his book illustrations. The theme of the poem is consistently echoed through the appearance of the sardonic figure of King Death in every scene. The plates are coloured aquatints.

Pyne, William Henry. History of the Royal Residences. 1819

Lavishly illustrated with coloured aquatints taken from the drawings of various artists, Pyne's work illustrates both exteriors and interiors. This copy was presented to the University of Toronto by Queen Victoria.

Milton, John. Paradise Lost. 1827

John Martin's edition of Milton's poem is one of the most striking English illustrated books. The forty-eight mezzotints were executed by Martin himself and the work appeared in eight different formats. His vision of Paradise Lost has been called apocalyptic romanticism.

Wyatt, Matthew Digby. Views of the Crystal Palace. 1854

Chromolithography, a process used extensively for the reproduction of coloured illustrations, appeared at a time when the Great Exhibition of 1851 provided the impetus for a whole series of illustrated books. These views of the Crystal Palace were produced by one of the masters of lithographic techniques.

Notman, William. Photographic Selections. 1863

The invention and speedy development of photography eventually had a profound effect on book illustration. In its early stages, however, it was used as merely another reproductive method. William Notman, the most famous of the nineteenth century Canadian photographers included a few original views in this work, along with many photographs of major art works.

This exhibition has been produced to honour the delegates to:

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Fifteenth Annual Conference on Editorial Problems. November 2-3, 1979.

Richard Landon

Margery Pearson
October 1979

Schedel, Hartmann. Liber Chronicarum. 1493